

# Helping Your Children Achieve

R e p o r t i n g



# 2001 STAR Results to Parents/Guardians



- Check with your children every day to make sure homework assignments are completed.
- Ask questions about mathematics and solve problems as you play games, watch television, or prepare a favorite recipe.

- Show children how you use mathematics in what you do every day (e.g., cooking, crafts, automobile repair, speedometer reading, shopping).
- Help your children read charts or graphs in newspapers, magazines, or television, and talk about what they mean.

## In Other Academic Areas

Other academic areas such as science and history-social science challenge students to combine reading and mathematics skills with their knowledge of the subject. Parents should share their interests in these academic areas because children become interested in what is discussed at home. Family trips might include visits to museums and historic sites. Television viewing might include one night a week when the family chooses to learn about a topic of the student's choice. Newspapers, magazine articles, or television programs about a new scientific discovery or an important historical event should be shared and discussed.



## Suggestions for Parents

As you talk with your children's teachers about results of the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program, one question you may have is, "How can I help them do better?"

Parents or guardians play an important role in their children's education. Positive attitudes at home about completing school assignments, learning new skills, and "doing your best" can make a difference. Research about learning shows that a great deal can be done at home to increase a student's academic performance.

There are many things you can do to support your student's education. Some activities for helping your students in reading, writing, spelling, mathematics, and other academic areas follow.

## In Reading and Writing

- Talk with your children about their studies, homework, and what they did at school. Listen to your children read and read stories aloud to them.

## You Can Help Your Children Do Better on Tests

- Have a family time when you read the newspaper, a magazine, or a book, and your children read their own books. Talk about what you and your children are reading and words they do not understand.
- Encourage your children to write such things as shopping lists, thank-you notes, requests, short stories, recipes, and journals.
- Set a limit on the amount of time your children watch television. Watch and discuss television programs with them whenever possible.
- Take your children to the library regularly and help them select their books.

## In Mathematics

- Attend parent education classes about mathematics to prepare for questions that your children might ask at home.

- the STAR Program with state content standards that specify what students should know and be able to do at every grade.
- In addition to the STAR tests in English, limited-English-proficient Spanish-speaking students who first enrolled in California public schools less than 12 months prior to testing were given the Spanish Assessment of Basic Education (SABE/2).
- Reports of each student's results on all STAR tests are to be mailed home within 20 days after they arrive in the district. Reports of results for the Stanford 9 and the Standards Tests are separate from the report of results for the SABE/2.

## Parent Assistance

- As parents/guardians begin to review their student's STAR 2001 results, many questions may come to mind. Parents/guardians can get questions answered in a number of ways. They can contact their children's teacher or school office. A variety of school activities to inform parents/guardians about individual student and school results for STAR 2001 may be planned. Information also may be available through the STAR test coordinator at the school district office.
- The California Department of Education also has prepared a special assistance packet for Reporting 2001 STAR Results to Parents/Guardians that addresses all parts of the STAR Program in more detail. This parent assistance packet has been posted at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/star/star.html> on the Internet. Copies of the Assistance Packet were distributed to school districts and county offices of education. A Spanish translation of the sample materials for parents also is posted on the Internet.

# QA Questions & Answers for Parents

## What is the STAR testing program?

One part of the state testing system is called the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program. This program, administered annually, was authorized in 1997 by state law (Senate Bill 376). The purpose of the STAR Program is to help measure how well students are learning basic academic skills.

## Who must take the STAR tests?

All students in grades 2 through 11 must take the designated STAR tests. Students learning English and students in special education programs are included. Only students whose Individual Education Plans (IEP) specifically exempt them from STAR testing and students with written parent requests to exempt them do not take the STAR tests.

## What tests did the students take in spring 2001?

- The STAR Program has three components:
- the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition, Form T (Stanford 9), published by Harcourt Educational Measurement
  - California Standards Tests, produced for California public schools
  - the Spanish Assessment of Basic Education, 2nd Edition (SABE/2), an achievement test in Spanish published by CTB/McGraw-Hill

## What are California Standards Tests?

California Standards Tests were developed specifically for California public schools. These tests are aligned to state-adopted content standards in reading, writing, mathematics, history-social science, and science.

## What subjects were tested in English?

Students in grades 2 through 8 were tested with the Stanford 9 in reading, written expression (language), spelling, and mathematics. Students in grades 9 through 11 were tested in reading, written expression (language), mathematics, history-social science, and science. The California Standards Tests covered reading, writing, and mathematics in grades 2 through 11; and history-social science and science in grades 9 through 11. In addition to the tests given to all students in grades 2 through 8, students in grades 4 and 7 were required to write an essay.

## What about limited-English-proficient students?

In addition to taking the Stanford 9 and the California Standards Tests in English, limited-English-proficient Spanish-speaking students who had been enrolled in California public schools less than 12 months were required to take the SABE/2. This part of the test was optional if the students had been enrolled in California public schools more than 12 months.

## Who gave the STAR tests, and how long did they take?

Teachers who received special training gave the STAR tests at the local school. It took 7–8 hours to complete the Stanford 9 and the California Standards Tests, depending on the grade level. The SABE/2 added about 4 hours for limited-English-proficient students. STAR testing was spread over several days.

## How were the questions on the tests asked?

All of the test questions were in a multiple-choice format, except for the new student essays in grades 4 and 7. The multiple-choice questions required students to select the correct answer from four or five possible answers. The student essay required students to respond to a writing task.

## What was done to help students with special needs?

Most students with special needs took the test with all other students under standard conditions. Certain accommodations and adaptations such as additional time, Braille, or large-print tests were provided for special education students who needed assistance. Accommodations also included revised test directions or format or the use of aides and/or aids to provide additional help.

The accommodations must be based on explicit statements in each student's IEP. Those accommodations must match the ones students receive for classwork throughout the year.

## What was done to help English Learners?

English Learners who had been enrolled in California public schools less than 12 months could use bilingual dictionaries, have extra time, and have teachers translate the test directions. Local school boards must have a policy to allow this assistance.

## How and when do parents/guardians get their student's test results?

Each student's test results must be reported to parents/guardians within 20 working days after the school district receives them. In most cases these reports are mailed. Group results by grade level for each school, district, county, and the state are to be posted on the Internet no later than August 15, 2001. Results for the Stanford 9 and the California Standards Tests and results for the SABE/2 are on separate reports.

## How are individual test results for STAR 2001 reported for students?

The Stanford 9 and SABE/2 results are reported as national percentiles. A national percentile compares the student's results with scores of a national sample of students in the same grade who were tested at the same time of the school year.

Scores for the 2001 California Standards Tests in English-Language Arts, Mathematics, History-Social Science, and Science include the number and percent of questions the student answered correctly. In addition, scores for the English-Language Arts Standards Tests given in spring 2001 are reported according to the performance levels achieved (i.e., advanced, proficient, basic, below basic, and far below basic). The levels indicated how well students met state standards for each subject area tested. The goal is to have all students performing at proficient and advanced levels.

The writing tests in grades 4 and 7 are scored separately and are not included in the performance levels. Scores for the writing tests are reported separately.

It is expected that scores for Standards Tests in Mathematics, History-Social Science, and Science will be reported with performance levels in 2002.

## Is the California Reading List Number Reported?

For the second year, a California Reading List Number on the STAR Parent Report directs students, parents/guardians, and teachers to a list of state-recommended books that are at a student's reading level. The Reading List Number is tied to the student's Stanford 9 reading comprehension score and ranges from 1–13+.

## Where can parents/guardians find the California Reading List?

Parents/guardians can find the approved reading list at <http://harcourt.fsc.follett.com/california/wrx/s.exe> on the Internet. Internet access is available at most California public libraries. Reading list information may also be obtained from local school districts or county offices of education.

## How are the STAR test results used?

Teachers, parents/guardians, and students use individual STAR results to help monitor each student's academic progress. Individual student results are merged to prepare grade-level reports by subject area for each school, district, county, and the state. The results are used with other information about student achievement to help make decisions about ways to improve student learning and school programs.

## How can parents/guardians help the school improve student achievement?

Schools invite parents/guardians and other community members to become actively involved in improving student learning. Every school has various committees of parents/guardians who assist in school decision making, including the Parent Teacher Association and school site councils. In addition, individual teachers are frequently in search of volunteers to help with classroom instruction. Research studies show that parent/guardian and community involvement in the school can improve academic achievement.

## How can parents/guardians learn more about the STAR test results?

The school provides a brief explanation about the results with the STAR Parent Reports. No school, district, county, or state results are reported on the individual student reports. These results are available on the Internet at <http://star.cde.ca.gov> on August 15, 2001. Individual student scores will not be on the Internet.